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Milwaukee County Child Welfare Improves

MADISON.....Today, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) announced they have met another benchmark in improving child welfare in Milwaukee County and have been released from one of two remaining provisions outlined in the 2002 Jeanine B. Settlement Agreement.

The Department directly operates child welfare services in Milwaukee County through the Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare (BMCW). The settlement agreement requires BMCW to achieve specific outcomes regarding the permanency, safety, and well-being of children in out-of-home care.

“The Department has been successful in improving the outcomes of children and families in the child welfare system in Milwaukee County,” said Eloise Anderson, Secretary of the Department of Children and Families. “While we celebrate this achievement, we remain committed to our mission of keeping kids safe and will continue to improve the services we provide to families in Milwaukee.”

The Department met the performance standard in the agreement by reunifying more children with their parents as quickly as possible. In the two most recent six-month periods, July-December 2011 and January-June 2012, 71% of the children in out-of-home care who reunified with their parents reunified within a twelve- month period.

“We are continuing to safely reduce the number of children in out-of-home care,” said Anderson. “In 2012 we have had less than 2,000 children in out-of-home care, and in June the number dropped below 1,900 for the first time. In contrast, when the state began operating the Milwaukee child welfare system in 1998 there were more than 6,000 kids in out-of-home care.”

The Department continues to improve the safety and well-being of children in out-of-home care in Milwaukee County. Caseworkers are visiting the children on a monthly basis, or more frequently, in 97% of their cases. This far exceeds the federal benchmark of 90%. The number of children experiencing abuse or neglect in out-of-home care has decreased to the lowest level in five years (.20%) and significantly below the standard identified in the settlement agreement (.60%).

“We will continue to strive to ensure that kids stay safe while in out-of-home care and are reunited with their families as quickly as possible,” said Anderson. “Today’s announcement shows we are making significant progress towards that goal.”

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